

THE WRESTLING LARIAT

UK Edition

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

World War 3 Anything But!

by Tim Whitehead

The deepest roster in the world doesn't guarantee an exciting pay-per-view show. That is the lesson to be learned from WCW's World War III from a near sold-out Palace at Auburn Hills in suburban Detroit. The show was a huge success at the gate, earning a record monetary amount for WCW due to both the large turnout and the new higher ticket prices (15,735 fans paying \$407,831) and with WCW hot right now it will probably draw a good buy rate. WCW is in the position Titan was in a decade ago, meaning that it's considered "cool" to attend WCW shows, particularly PPV's and Nitros. This fact was never more apparent to me than it was when tickets for the 12/1 Nitro in Knoxville, TN sold out in a record 90 minutes, which was such big news locally that it merited a story in the Knoxville newspapers. WCW needs to take advantage of their current position by putting on great shows so that when the heat the promotion has generated wears off, as it inevitably will, they will have established their credentials as a solid wrestling promotion and will continue to draw fans based on the in-ring action. Thus far, the promotion has had mixed results in doing this. On the one hand, their lower card action is generally hot (this show being something of an exception to that rule), but there is also a sense of complacency setting in regarding PPV's. This is actually understandable since there are now so many of them that it's become a major chore to book an entertaining show every time out. In WCW, the emerging pattern seems to be one where, like in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, some PPV's are more equal than others. And on that scale Starrcade, with it's long track record plus the impending Hulk Hogan vs. Sting showdown, is far more equal than World War III. In addition, the thought process in the WCW office seems to be that the 60 man three ring battle royal is a greater attraction than it actually is, and that it can carry the show by itself. The result here was a show which was not terrible (though there were a few really bad undercard bouts), but was certainly well below average. The live crowd reflected this reality, being cool for much of the show but coming alive for the one really good match (Eddie Guerrero vs. Rey Mysterio Jr.) and for the main event battle royal, which is admittedly something of a unique spectacle though it's almost impossible to follow it and by its very nature has virtually no chance to be a good match. But if Eric Bischoff wanted to display the depth of his roster in relation to the WWF, he definitely succeeded on that count, at least in sheer numbers of name wrestlers under contract. Commentary on the show was generally weak. Mike Tenay replacing Dusty Rhodes was an improvement but for every action there is an equal but opposite reaction, so Bobby Heenan was worse than usual to cancel out Tenay's positives.

MENG & BARBARIAN defeated **GLACIER & ERNEST MILLER** in 9:07. Jimmy Hart is now back at ringside managing Meng & Barbarian. They brawled early with Miller's martial arts blows looking obviously "pulled". Miller did a springboard plancha onto Barbarian for the one noteworthy move of the match. Glacier also did a plancha onto Meng. Glacier went after Hart but Barbarian blindsided him and he got double-teamed for a while. Miller hot tagged in and cleaned house (including on Hart, who took a good bump for a man his age) but Meng got the Tongan Death Grip on him for the pin. Everyone here worked hard but the match overall was weak.

PERRY SATURN defeated **DISCO INFERNO** to retain the TV Title in 8:19. Saturn came out of the crowd accompanied by Raven. There was a ton of stalling here, with Disco getting in some surprising offense and Saturn bailing out to the floor several times. Disco had Saturn reeling with fists and kicks, which really looked bizarre considering Saturn's ECW reputation and Disco's status as a comedy act. Saturn hurled Disco across the ring in what can best be described as a released fisherman suplex. Both wrestlers bumped to the floor where Disco got into it with the Raven's Nest members. Disco dragged Kidman over the rail and gave him the chartbuster (Steve Austin's Stone Cold Stunner move) and also walloped one of Raven's other geeks but Hammer stopped Disco in his tracks. Saturn tossed Disco back in, with Disco then coming off the top for a bodypress attempt but Saturn reversed it into his Rings of Saturn submission finisher for the win. Not much of a match, and very strange as well.

YUJI NAGATA pinned **ULTIMO DRAGON** in 12:47. Had Dragon won, he would have gotten five minutes with Sonny Onno. This match was disappointingly slow paced, with Dragon still nursing an elbow injury. They quickly went to the floor where Sonny kicked Dragon. Dragon tried to suplex Sonny on the floor but Nagata made the save. Dragon locked Nagata in a headlock but Nagata suplexed his way out. Nagata scored a two count with a piledriver and then hooked on the sleeper. He got

another two with yet another piledriver and then put Dragon in the wakigatamae (arm bar) but Dragon made the ropes. At around the 9:00 mark Dragon generated a pop by laying in some stiff kicks which sent Nagata from the ring. Dragon hit a plancha but was met with a kick but, in a neat move, held onto the leg and hit a leg whip. Dragon hit another plancha, then got a two count with a power bomb. Dragon got another two with a moonsault. Dragon locked on the Dragon Sleeper and Nagata appeared to submit but the ref didn't see it since he was distracted by Onno. Dragon got yet another two count with a frankensteiner off the top but Sonny put Nagata's foot on the ropes. Finally, Dragon went for a suplex but Nagata's boot hit Sonny and Dragon "lost his balance" and Nagata fell on top of him for the pin. The ending looked really bad. The match had a few good spots but was too slow paced overall.

THE STEINERS beat **STEVEN REGAL & DAVID TAYLOR** in 9:44 to retain the World Tag Titles. The Steiners got a few pops here since they're from the Detroit area. Lord Regal looks like he's been eating a few too many meals fit for a king. Scott suplexed Taylor early in the match and both he and Regal fled to the floor. The Steiners worked over Regal's left arm and hit some more of their signature suplexes. Rick powerslammed Taylor for a big pop. Scott took a bump over the top, enabling Regal & Taylor to get in some offense. All four ended up brawling in the ring, with Rick pinning Regal after bulldogging him from off Scott's shoulders. Another mediocre match.

RAVEN defeated **SCOTTY RIGGS** by TKO in 8:43. Prior to the bout, J.J. Dillon said he's giving Raven 24 hours (i.e., until the next evening's Nitro) to sign a contract or he's out of WCW. Raven and his gang issued their usual demand for this to be a no DQ match, and it somehow became one without an official ruling being given. Riggs, sporting an eye patch from the Nitro angle a couple of weeks ago, hit a plancha on the entire Raven's Nest to start the match. Riggs worked Raven over on the floor. In the ring, Riggs scored a two count with a neckbreaker. They went back to the floor and Raven took a bump into the stairs. They again returned to the ring and Raven hit Riggs with a chairshot and went for the move that "blinded" Riggs on Nitro but Riggs reversed it and Raven went face-first into the chair. The ref started a ten count but Riggs interrupted it by going for a pin, but only got two. Riggs then got a series of two counts with mistimed spots using the chair, including the ECW spot where the chair was tossed to Raven and then kicked into his face after he caught it (though it missed by a mile in this case). Raven came back and DDT'd Riggs several times, eventually "knocking him out" and leading to the ten count TKO. Raven got on the mic and said he felt Riggs' pain. Hammer carried Riggs out afterward. This is all part of an on-going storyline to recruit Riggs into the Raven's Nest but the match was really bad.

STEVE McMICHAEL beat **ALEX WRIGHT** in 3:34. McMichael was scheduled to wrestle Bill Goldberg but due to Goldberg's groin injury the plans were changed. Mongo came out carrying a pipe and announced that he'd already taken care of Goldberg, and the camera cut to the back where Goldberg was shown lying unconscious on the floor. Mongo also displayed his Super Bowl ring, which he had recovered. Debra then showed up dragging a reluctant Wright as a substitute. After a brief, non-eventful match, Mongo pinned Wright with the tombstone piledriver.

EDDIE GUERRERO defeated **REYMYSTERIO JR.** to retain the Cruiserweight Title in 12:42. At this point the show was looking disastrous as there hadn't been any above average matches up to this point, but this one was a virtual lock to be good and it delivered. Mysterio hit a great spinning legscissors takedown. Guerrero retaliated with a released German suplex. They messed up a couple of Lucha spots, and then went to the floor where Mysterio hit a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. Guerrero did a superplex. Mysterio scored a two count with a huracanrana. Eddie got two with a face-first suplex followed by a spinning headscissors. Mysterio hit a huracanrana on the floor. He then hit a somersault senton splash. Mysterio got two with a springboard flip splash. After Guerrero's head hit the post, Mysterio went for a huracanrana but ended up getting power bombed. After missing on another move, Mysterio scored a near fall with a moonsault. Mysterio hit a springboard legdrop on Guerrero but it appeared to legit hurt Mysterio's hip. Mysterio still hit a springboard huracanrana and it looked like he got the three count but the ref saw Eddie's hand on the ropes. Guerrero then dropped Mysterio's head on the turnbuckles (the "snake eyes" move) and hit a frog splash for the clean pin. A real good match but due to a few missed moves it wasn't "Match of the Year" calibre.

CURT HENNIG defeated **RIC FLAIR** to retain the U.S. Title in a no-DQ match in 17:57. Hennig did the stalling routine, so Flair had to go after him on the floor and they brawled some into the crowd (which is the latest PPV fad). Flair did a spot where he came off the top to the floor onto Hennig, who was draped over the rail. Flair was limping after doing this spot. The match had little heat until the end, except for occasional "Whoooo's"

whenever Flair did the chop. Hennig backdropped Flair on the concrete floor. Both guys looked tired after the first few minutes. Flair worked over Hennig's leg with the storyline that both guys were working towards a submission move. Hennig put on the Indian Death Lock but Flair escaped with an eye rake. Hennig scored a few two counts but Flair came back with some slow motion brawling. Flair used a chair on Hennig's leg and went for the figure four but Hennig clocked him with the title belt and scored the pin. A so-so match at best.

SCOTT HALL won the Three Ring Battle Royal in 29:50. The rules here were different from a traditional battle royal since to eliminate someone you merely had to toss him to the floor, not necessarily via over the top rope. There was some confusion about the entrants in this match. There were supposed to be sixty men but three scheduled participants dropped out (Ric Flair, selling an injury from the prior match, Bill Goldberg, selling the pipe shot from Mongo, and Scotty Riggs, selling the injuries from his match). However, there still ended up being fifty-eight entrants to start the match, so presumably there were some "last minute substitutes", though this discrepancy was never explained. Actually, there would have been fifty-nine men at the start but Kevin Nash failed to show, which was a set-up for the closing angle. Anyway, the fifty-eight entrants were as follows: Dallas Page, Ray Traylor, Alex Wright, Disco Inferno, Meng, Villano IV, Villano V, Chris Benoit, David Finlay, La Parka, Steven Regal, Rocco Roc, Johnny Grunge, David Taylor, Ultimo Dragon, Norman Smiley, Louis Spicolli, Hector Garza, Juventud Guerrera, The Giant, Chris Adams, Greg Valentine, Yuji Nagata, Chris Jericho, Wrath, Booker T, Stevie Ray, Rick Steiner, Scott Steiner, Hacksaw Duggan, Hugh Morrus, Lex Luger, Lizmark Jr., Ernest Miller, Brad Armstrong, Silver King, Mortis, Barbarian, Eddie Guerrero, Damian, Prince Iaukea, Dean Malenko, Barry Darsow, Kendall Windham, John Nord, El Dandy, Rey Mysterio Jr., Steve McMichael, Halloween, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Renegade, Bobby Blaze, Glacier, Scott Hall, Marcus Bagwell, Vincent, Curt Hennig, and Randy Savage. The problems with a match like this are well-known. With so many wrestlers involved, it's impossible to follow the action until the closing minutes when most everyone has been eliminated. Putting all three rings on the TV screen at one time doesn't help, either. With the winner earning a World Title shot (in this case at Superbrawl in February) even the most casual fans know that only a few wrestlers can potentially win. Most of the roster consists of ring fodder whose only point in being there is to be eliminated to put the chosen few over. The only positive is that the fans live do seem to get into seeing so many wrestlers at once, so the crowd heat was good. The five nWo wrestlers occupied one ring and used their numerical strength to eliminate everyone else in that ring. The Giant eliminated everyone in his ring, finishing things off by dropkicking Meng out at just prior to the 20:00 mark. The remaining ring had Luger, Page, Booker T, and Rick Steiner remaining, so it was five WCW wrestlers vs. the five nWo guys. After a series of eliminations it came down to Giant, Page, Hall, and Savage. Page hit the Diamond Cutter on Savage and was going to roll him out but Giant stopped him and chokeslammed Savage first (Giant was selling a broken thumb from an angle on last week's Nitro and wanted to prove he could still do the chokeslam). Anyway, this left Hall alone with Giant & Page. The nWo music then began playing and Hulk Hogan arrived and for reasons which were never explained was allowed to enter the ring and join the fight as a fresh man. Hulk bodyslammed Giant and eliminated Page as a "We want Sting" chant erupted. "Sting" then repelled down from the ceiling and entered the ring. Due to his height and build it was obvious from the start that this was really Kevin Nash. Hogan fled when he saw "Sting", eliminating himself (assuming he was legally part of this in the first place). "Sting" then hit Giant with the bat, eliminating him. On the floor, "Sting" hit Giant's injured hand with the bat. "Sting" then threatened Hall, who acted scared, but then unmasked to reveal himself as Nash. Hall was declared the winner and the nWo celebrated by destroying Page, including Hogan using the Diamond Cutter on him. A lame ending, which made the rules of the match even more confusing than they were to begin with.

NOTES: They did a spot during the main event with Rey Mysterio Jr. where he was rolled from the ring but held onto the apron outside without actually touching the floor, though he was eventually declared to be eliminated. ... Scott Hall's World Title shot will come at a time when, presumably, Sting will be the champion but with everything that's going down (including the Bret Hart arrival) who knows what will actually happen. ... The fake Sting stuff is getting really old. ... Raven's Nest seems more silly than intimidating. They are well on the way to being in the same league as the Dungeon of Doom or James Vandenberg's crew. ... With such a deep roster, some of these guys are doomed to be lost in the proverbial shuffle. ... The gate set the new WCW record, eclipsing the previous gate from the Boston Nitro earlier this year where they drew \$243,000. This gate will be broken at Starrcade.

ECW IN QUEENS 11/20

by Ron Lemieux

ECW took its "November To Remember" tour to the Elk's Lodge in Queens on Thursday, November 20th. The show, which was the last TV taping before the 11/30 show, was basically a good preview for the PPV. Ring announcer Steve DeAngelis opened the show with announcements you usually hear at a WWF or WCW show. The reason for this was that there was a much heavier presence than usual from the NY State Athletic Commission.

Tommy Rogers made his Queens debut in the opening match, beating Chris Chetti in 8:14. Chants started 20 seconds in, such as "Boring", "Who the fuck are you", and "We want Sandman", insinuating that these were two jobronis in the ring. Well, being a huge mark for Rogers, I took exception and took it upon myself to say to the dork next to me, "Let me guess, you've been a fan since 1996." The guy responded, "No, 1995." He had no clue why I asked. After about three minutes of chain wrestling, Chetti dropkicked Rogers out of the ring. He went for a plancha but Tommy jumped back in the ring. Chetti then jumped from the apron to the top rope and hit Rogers with a clothesline. Chetti scored a nice superplex on Tommy for a two count. Chetti legscissored Tommy, trying to send him over the top rope, but they made it look real sloppy, eliciting a "You Fucked up" chant. They then started chanting "Monday Nitro". Why they were chanting a show's name that they probably watch religiously week after week is beyond me. Am I giving you the feeling that some ECW fans really tick me off? Rogers used a slingshot suplex at 8:00 and then followed it up with a finisher that I've never seen. He was going for a backslide but halfway through the move he dropped down and Chetti's head went into the mat like a DDT. Let's call it a backslide DDT. The finisher got Rogers over. **

Next up was tag action as Justin Credible and Jason defeated Spike Dudley and Mikey Whipwreck in 8:27. As I've said before, I don't see it in Credible but he does have excellent intro music. Early on, the heels were standing outside the ring when Spike hit Jason with a somersault plancha and Mikey hit Justin with a regular plancha. Mikey used an atomic drop on Jason and Spike came off the ropes with a flying DDT. Lots of good tag team moves by Spike and Mikey. You can tell they've been teaming a lot. At 3:30, Jason bit a Tiger bomb on Spike. Credible then delivered four vertical suplexes in a row. Pretty cool. But then, he blew it by doing the overused "chop at the crotch" deal. Fans started chanting "Stone Cold Aldo". All four took it outside at the 7 minute mark. Spike then used a stunner from the top rope on Jason but as soon as he got up, Justin used the corkscrew tombstone for the win. ** ½

Chris Candido beat Jerry Lynn in 17:24. During Candido's introduction, New Jack was standing in the balcony watching through a door. Chris saw him and they started jawing at each other, goofing off. Fans started chanting "Barry Horowitz" at Chris. Candido took the house mic and responded, "I didn't just lose to him twice, I lost to him about 35 times on the road. But I've made more money than Horowitz so shut the hell up". At the 5 minute mark Lynn dropkicked Chris off the top rope and then hit a great top rope plancha. At 6:30 Candido went for a leg scissors but Jerry dropped him on his face. Candido at one point started laying in the chops in the corner, to which as usual the fans started a "Whoo" deal. Candido started playing it up by stroking the hair back and doing the Flair strut. The last two minutes involved numerous two counts. Pee Wee Moore, who was refereeing the match, was really screwing these up as his counts were too fast and a few looked like 3 counts. Candido finished it with a top rope double arm suplex. ** ½

Joel Gertner and the Dudleys made their way out. Yeah, their schtick is long but, for the most part, it's hilarious Gertner's delivery is perfect. A 400 pound fan, who is a Queens regular, then mooned the Dudleys, like he does at every show. Believe me, it is not a pretty sight, although I caught Scherer staring at the last show. The fans started chanting "ECW" when he bares his butt. Buh Buh gets the mic and says, "Anyone that can get an ECW chant going off of that is okay in my book." He follows that up with a line from Deliverance. "You have a mighty purty mouth boy." The quintessential stud muffin intros himself as Joel "Just like the butcher in town, you can beat my prices but you can't beat my meat" Gertner. This match was an ECW TV title defense for Taz, as he faces Buh Buh Ray. Dudley attacked Taz before the bell. At 1:30 Taz was thrown into the guardrail and then was beat up outside by Big Dick and D-Von. Ref John Finnegan told Buh Buh to stop it but Dudley acted helpless. Finnegan then asked for more officials from the back, which brought out Balls Mahoney and Axl Rotten in referee shirts. They brawled with Dick and D-Von to the back, leaving Buh Buh to submit to the Tazmission in 5:34. Taz then did some mic work about being from Brooklyn, yadda yadda, and then said if we thought what Vince and Bret did was a shoot wait until we see what he does at the PPV in Pittsburgh. *

Joey Styles then intro'd the TV show that airs the weekend of the PPV. He brought out Shane and Francine, who is still on crutches. Shane surprisingly started putting the NY crowd over the Philly crowd, which popped the crowd huge as the NY crowd has this penis envy problem with the Philly crowd. Did I say "crowd" enough in that sentence? But he was just setting them up as he then said they were second rate to the Pittsburgh crowd. During his 5 minute monologue he got nailed in the head with a quarter, as a trickle of blood started running down his forehead.

The FBI retained their ECW tag belts over Axl and Balls in 13:09. A fan held a sign that read, "Full Blooded Scrubs". Guess the kid can't spell as "Scrubs" doesn't begin with an "I". Other than their entrance music, Balls and Axl had very little heat. At the 7:00 mark, Tracy went for a leapfrog but Balls caught him with a powerbomb. At 8:19, Balls was dropkicked outside by Tracy and Rich hit him with the flag. Axl got the hot tag at 11:28 and lined up Guido and Smothers and delivered a Dusty bionic elbow to both. No pop whatsoever. Guido then accidentally clotheslined the ref, which brought out Jeff Jones. The Dudleys also came out at this point. During the melee, Jones ended up counting the pin on Axl, by Guido. Kronus and New Jack then joined the fray and a four way preview to the PPV took place. It lasted about 10 minutes. The match itself was a dud but the post match brawl was very good. Some fan was yelling at New Jack that he sold out, obviously believing the report earlier in the week that said Jack and the Pit Bulls were going to WCW. Well, New Jack laid

into the kid verbally after the melee. He told him that ECW was his home and he wasn't going anywhere and told him to have his momma do something not very nice to him. Hey, I have to draw the line somewhere. This is a sports entertainment newsletter!

Then, an incident happened that killed any momentum the show had. While the ring crew cleaned up the mess, the crowd looked for something to entertain them and they spotted the woman from the last show that was dressed quite provocatively and incited the infamous "Show your tits" chant. She was dressed more conservatively this time and out and was with a friend. The fans started their chant and her friend, with no prodding whatsoever, lifted her shirt for her puppies to breath. That was cool. The second time was cool too, but by the third time it was getting old and her friend had the ones that everyone really wanted to see (except me of course). The fans started chanting "suck her tits", wanting to see the friends have a get together so to speak. Wasn't going to happen. Paul E. then came out and said if she was going to show all his friends her tits, he wanted to see them too. The girl that lifted her shirt started coming to the ring, which panicked Paul because he didn't want her to do it in the ring, especially with the commission on hand. Paul dropped his mic and started yelling at security to stop her, which they did. The girl then went back to her seat and refused to show Paul her pups. Paul then turned his attention on her friend, from the last show, and told her that since it seemed she wanted to take over the show, it was all hers. The problem with this was that at this point, Paul put the mic by his side and just watched her for a few minutes. There was nothing happening and the fans started getting restless. Some fans started yelling to get some wrestling going. After about 10 more minutes of this, Jim Molineaux came out and whispered something to Paul. On the way back, Jim stopped at the sound guy's booth. Paul finally said, "That's enough, I now give you the best set of tits in the building. Hit the music." With that, the Village People started belting out "YMCA" and the Blue Meanie came out with Super Nova to lead the crowd. Nothing close to how it looked in Philly.

Once everything calmed down, Chastity came out with Paul Diamond. She said the only way the crown would get to see her tits would be to "Show me the money". Wrong thing to say. Fans started throwing coins in the ring from all angles. Chastity then says her and Paul are the best couple in wrestling today. Dreamer's music then plays and he and Beulah come out. Chastity challenges them to a mixed tag, which Tommy accepts but when the bell rings the girls jump to the floor. There was a very obvious anti-Dreamer fan in the crowd as he had a sign that read, "Tommy Dreamer-ECW Every Cock Welcome". Ouch. Diamond dropkicked Dreamer's injured foot. A catfight broke out at 6:00. The guy's then grabbed the other's girl. Paul went to piledrive Beulah but she gave him a low blow while Dreamer gave Chastity an atomic drop. Dreamer won with a DDT in 6:54. ¾ *

Bam Bam Bigelow beat Sabu via DQ in 5:21. Very good match, just a little short. Not much of a pop when the champ came out. Sabu dropkicked Bigelow over the top rope and he went over the guardrail. Sabu then came off the ropes and jumped on a chair and flew over the ropes and rail onto Bammer. At 3:11, Bigelow powerbombed Sabu on a chair. He then missed a headbutt and clocked the chair. At 4:56 Sabu hit a cross body, which sent them both over the ropes. At this point, Bill Alfonso spotted the Sandman in the balcony, holding up his cane. Rob Van Dam came in to interfere, causing the DQ. Sandman started making his way down but before he got there, Tommy Dreamer came in to even things up. Shane Douglas then came out and attacked Bam Bam and they brawled to the back. A ladder was then brought in and the heels used it on Tommy's foot before Sandman finally hit the ring and the heels scattered. *** ½.

Notes: Crowd was the usual sellout of 1,100 although prior to the show the line was not as long as last time. It was pretty cold, especially to ex-Floridians like me. ... Early site talk of the late February PPV is Elizabeth, NJ at the Dunn Center. ... ECW is in talks with Channel 20 out of Waterbury, CT, which is carried on cable throughout the state. This would definitely soften the blow if they lose MSG, which at some point may very well happen. ... During the training session before the crowd was let in, Axl, Smothers and Diamond were working with some trainees in the ring. New Jack jumped in and started showing the rookies how to pummel someone in the corner. He told them they had to make more noise while delivering the blows. All I could think of was the fear in some of these kids wondering if Jack would lose it and start shooting on them. Actually New Jack did a great job and was really helpful to them. ... They return to Queens on Dec. 26th. On a final note, I'd like to personally thank Quigs for the tapes. They were mucho appreciated. I'll buy you some beers when I make my ECW Arena debut. (Insert your own joke there, I know Dave will).

THE ECW REPORT

by Dave Scherer

Poughkeepsie 11/21

ECW their debut show at the Mid Hudson Civic Center in Poughkeepsie, NY on 11/21 in front of a crowd of about 1,500 people. The reports I received said that it was a really strong show that left both the fans and the company happy.

The card opened with Jerry Lynn and Tommy Rogers beating the team of

Roadkill and Paul Diamond in a good match. Lance Wright and Chastity came out with the heels, and Lance got roughed up a bit. The finish saw Lynn pin Diamond with the Steiners' "bulldog from the top" finish, as Diamond was on Rogers' shoulders. Rogers looked great here, again. Has the guy been in a vacuum for ten years or what, because he has not lost a step. Roadkill and Diamond teased heat throughout.

Justin Credible saw Mikey Whipwreck end up as the next victim in the "Credible-mania Takes Over America" tour. I was told that this match was disappointing. Justin got the pin with his spinning piledriver.

Shane Douglas kept his push for the title win at the November To Remember alive by beating Chris Chetti in a really strong match. Shane, who has (like almost everyone else in ECW) been working with a ton of various injuries in the past year, has really been having good matches of late. Chetti continues to get better everytime he works. So, them having a good match doesn't shock me. Shane got the pin with a belly-to-belly.

Taz then squashed Spike Dudley, beating him with the Tazmission to defend the TV title. Spike got in a few moves but Taz largely killed him.

In another match that was a preview towards the N2R, the FBI retained the tag titles in a Four Way Dance, with tons of juice, over the men they will work with at the show, The Dudleys, Balls Mahoney and Axl Rotten, and New Jack and Kronus. The Duds and Axl & Balls started the match. Eventually, the FBI came to ringside but they stayed outside for most of the match. The Gangstanators came down with weapons and it was a decent brawl. The match saw New Jack & Kronus and the Duds eliminate each other at the same time when one guy from each team was pinned by one from the other. Jeff Jones then figured into the finish when he counted the pin for the FBI. The only problem was that the guy who pinned Balls was Tommy Rich! Tracy Smothers pinned Axl as well.

Bam Bam Bigelow kept up his place in his end of the PPV main event by beating Douglas' Triple Threat partner Chris Candido when he hit the Michinoku Driver. This was a good match that saw the Franchise come down and interfere. Francine hobbled down to ringside as well. The finish saw Bigelow get the pin with the Michinoku Driver. He hit the Michinoku Driver on Franchise as well.

Sabu and the Sandman, getting ready for their big match next week, had a psycho, Singapore cane match. The two had tons of great highspots and the finish saw Sabu get the pin with a multiple jump moonsault onto Sandman and the ladder. Great match. Sandman showed no rust and worked really hard. I have said for the longest time that I don't think that Sandman gets the recognition as a worker that he deserves, and I have the feeling that this time, like at Barely Legal, his match will steal the show. Rob Van Dam came out for a double-team after the match and they went right to the next bout.

The main event saw Tommy Dreamer beat Rob Van Dam with a DDT on a chair. Van Dam hit tons of hot moves here and largely dominated the match until the finish. Afterwards, Sabu came out and he and Rob killed Dreamer. Sandman made the save and he and Dreamer waved ECW banners after the match. Also, the reports I got said that, for some reason, Tommy took off Beulah's shirt and bra and covered here in an ECW flag.

Notes: The WWF has run tons of TV tapings at this building, but like they do everywhere now, they run here much less frequently than in the past. ECW has a good opportunity in the building. The company was impressed by how nice it was, and the wrestlers loved it as well. It has a 2,300 seat capacity and they believe they can fill it with the proper advertising.

Stuff

TV on 11/21 was largely a show done to promote the PPV. The show also featured a lot of clips from past November to Remember shows and they largely put over how Sandman always comes up big at the card every year, and dubbed him "Mr. November". ... They opened the show picking up where they left off last week, and that was the return of the Sandman. After Sandman saved Dreamer, he and Tommy had a beer. After showing a clip of 911 (remember him???) chokeslamming the guitar player who tried to do the national anthem at N2R '94, Joey Styles said that they would have a real guitarist do it this year. They are negotiating with Slash of Guns 'n' Roses and Styles announced him as being the guy on the hotline. There is a problem though because as of press time, they have not been able to find Slash, so if he does not appear, that's why. ... The first match they showed was the four way captain's match from the last Arena show. Wild violence. Crazy spots. Axl and Balls won. ... After teasing that they would get back at WCW at PPV, and they will folks, they brought back the Pulp Fiction interview segment, which I have always enjoyed. It was great, with all of those involved doing great interviews. Sandman, who showed up with a pierced eyebrow (ouch) was great. They showed a really disgusting bit where they had Beulah unwrap Dreamer's foot, and it was butt-ugly. She must love him. Good show for building momentum.

Joey Styles proposed a theory on his 11/21 ECW hotline segment where he thought that the whole Bret Hart screwjob scenario was a work between Vince McMahon and Hart. Right after the Survivor Series, Joey told me the same thing and told me I could quote him on that. He proposed a theory where he supposed that Bret and Vince McMahon made a deal, and did not tell anyone else. He said that Vince realized he could not pay Bret and that he and Bret entered into an alliance to get Bret as much as they could from WCW. He went on that Vince wanted to get the title off Bret before Raw the next night so that the WWF was not discredited. He then said, "Vince McMahon needed someone to give a damn about his promotion". He pointed out that Titan had no storylines and no ratings, so they did the deal to get people talking about the WWF. He then said he thought it was a plot, and not a double cross, because he theorized that after the match, Bret did not hit Michaels, who he hated, when Michaels said he knew nothing about it. He said that he

decked Vince, but not Shawn, and that he knew Shawn had to be in on it. He went on that Bret said that if Vince was still there when he got out of the shower, he would get him. Joey found it hard to believe that Bret, who was "infuriated" took the time to shower at the Molson Center when the hotel was right next door to the Arena. He theorized that if Bret was so mad he would have stormed out of the building and not hung around to take a shower. Then, he found it hard to believe that after having had Bret spit in his face and threaten to beat his ass, Vince still waited for Bret to get out of the shower and did not leave the room. And, he found it even harder to believe that Vince could not find enough people to surround himself with to keep Bret from getting to him when he did get out of the shower. He said that Bret got to leave and say he was screwed and became a cult hero to the fans and the boys for decking Vince in the face. Vince got to bang a ratings bonanza out of it. He said he got people to care about the WWF. He may not be right, but it's sure interesting to think about.

The Pit Bulls are probably on the way out of ECW. There is a ton of heat on them with the company based off of their statements that they will be going to Atlanta to join Raven's nest. The word I get on that is that if they clear their legal problems, there will be a place for them in WCW. ECW is sick of hearing that talk and is looking for a last minute, surprise opponent that they can have go against Taz and replace Pit Bull 2. As of press time, it looks doubtful that it will happen.

ECW will be starting on TV in Baton Rouge, LA in January. The show will air Sunday mornings at 12:30 a.m. and then again during mid-week. Coupled with their airing in New Orleans, look for ECW to start running shows in both cities, formerly big towns for the old Watts Mid South promotion, by spring of next year. ... Full line-up for the PPV, which at press time has sold over 2,400 tickets and will easily set the company gate and attendance record, has Shane Douglas vs. Bam Bam Bigelow for the title, Sabu vs. Sandman in a ladders and tables match (which I think will be incredible), Tommy Dreamer vs. Rob Van Dam in a flag match, Taz vs. Pit Bull 2 for the TV title (can you say SQUASH!), The Four Way for the tag belts, Justin Credible vs. Mikey Whipwreck, and just added, Chris Candido vs. Tommy Rogers. I think the Candido vs. Rogers match will be awesome. As most of you know, there will be a strong Lariat presence at the show and I will be filing a live report. In a reverse of roles, Tim Whitehead will be offering his thoughts as well. ... For those of you with web access, Jess McGrath, Joey Styles, and myself will be doing live audio from the 12/6 show from the ECW Arena. This is our second trial show and it will be free of charge. You can get the show by going to www.1wrestling.com at 7:30. Make sure you have the Real Player 5.0, which is available for free at www.real.com. With all of the Bret Hart new breaking, I did not get to comment on the first show we did. While it had a lot of technical difficulties, we had a lot of fun doing it and once we work the bugs out, it should be a winner.

MOONSAULTS AND MAYHEM

by Jess McGrath

IWA

The 11/18 Louisville house show was one of the group's best shows in a long time, highlighted by the surprise return of Wolfie D. Wolfie had worked for the promotion earlier in the year, but during one match he got into a shoot with Ox Harley, and he wasn't brought back shortly thereafter. His appearance took place during the Flash Flanagan vs. Tracy Smothers falls-count-anywhere match. Smothers hit Flash with the jawbreaker for a two-count, then did his cradleslam finisher. Doug Gilbert ran out, but Ian Rotten appeared to cut him off. Steven Dunn came out to stop Ian, which led to Mad Man Pondo, Harley, and Billy Travis all following. Meanwhile, Smothers and Flash took their table to the stage, where Tracy was going to piledrive Flanagan onto the floor. Flash's manager Kenny Bolin hit Tracy with his tennis racket, and Flanagan went for the cover, but Wolfie came through the door and attacked Flash. He dragged Flanagan back into the ring, gave him his spinning powerbomb finisher, and Tracy got the pin. Wolfie afterward said that his feud with Flanagan isn't an IWA or Music City thing, it's just about the two of them. He also mentioned how Flanagan tried to hang him from the balcony of the Nashville Fairgrounds. Wolfie then worked a match with J.T. Atlas, beating him with a spinning powerbomb. Flanagan ran in afterward, as did Dunn, but Ian Rotten made the save. Playing off the hanging from the balcony bit, challenges were made for a double dog-collar match with Rotten & Wolfie vs. Flanagan & Dunn for 12/2, with Ian vowing to hang both of his opponents with the chain. ... Attendance for the 11/18 show was 215 paid, with about 235 in the building total.

Since the removal of the weapons, the booking has improved drastically. That's not to say it wasn't good before, but the finishes have become more creative and more centered around building heat. Consider the following three matches. First was Bull Pain vs. Paul Diamond in a ladder match for the held-up heavyweight title. After a ref bump, Diamond ascended the ladder and grabbed the belt, but as he was coming down, Dunn ran in and broke a piece of drywall over Diamond's head. He fell down, and as he hit the mat, part of the belt ended up in Pain's hands. Diamond was also holding onto the belt. The ref woke up and saw both guys holding a piece of the title, so it remains held up pending a rematch. Very creative. Second, Billy Travis defeated Doug Gilbert in a first-blood

match with an old Memphis finish suggested by Gilbert. After doing the all-over-the-building brawl, they returned to the ring. The ref got bumped, and Gilbert broke a piece of metal over Travis' head, causing Travis to bleed. Billy wiped his blood onto Gilbert, so when Gilbert went to revive the ref, the referee saw Doug with blood and called for the bell. He raised Travis' hand, with Travis hiding his face and quickly heading back to the locker room. Again, it was a really good finish. Finally, in the main event, Ian Rotten beat Steven Dunn in a lumberjack strap match. All the lumberjacks started fighting, which allowed Bull Pain to climb to the top and KO Rotten with the NWA U.S. tag team title belt (and the shot ended up being super-stiff on Rotten). Diamond then jumped in and DDT'd Dunn, putting Rotten on top as the confused referee turned around and counted the pin. Flanagan then hit the ring for a double-team, with the heels holding off the babyfaces until they finally broke through. A great heated finish to a show.

In the Ox Harley vs. Mad Man Pondo last meeting for 60 days, Harley won with major help from Debbie Combs. Pondo begged for another match, with which the fans agreed. Commissioner Les Thatcher said he would allow the match with Combs banned from ringside. It's scheduled for the Thanksgiving show on 11/27. The added stip is that if Pondo loses, he must leave IWA forever, where if Harley loses, he only has to leave for 30 days. ... The rest of the Thanksgiving lineup has Ian Rotten vs. Cash Flow; Hack Myers vs. Rollin' Hard; Shark Boy vs. Chip Fairway (Bret King doing a golfer gimmick which is super-lame); American Kickboxer vs. Twiggly Ramirez; a match between two students from Al Snow's school; and one more bout. The lineup is really trim due to most of the regulars working for Music City that night. ... Cash Flow is getting a big push. ... The atmosphere in the locker room is really upbeat and comparable to ECW's in terms of people helping each other with all aspects of the matches. ... For the Wolfie return, the original idea was for both J.C. Ice and Wolfie D to make their comebacks. Ice was going to work an early match on the show, which would give the impression that he was the surprise. Then Wolfie would come out later as an added bonus. As it turns out, Ice had transportation problems. The angle which went down with Wolfie and Flanagan was just as it had been planned. ... 12/2 in Louisville has Ian & Wolfie vs. Flanagan & Dunn in the double dog-collar match, plus Pain vs. Diamond in a best-of-three-falls match for the held-up title where special stip will be on each fall. ... 12/4 in Lexington, KY, at the National Guard Armory has a really strong lineup: Ian Rotten vs. Bull Pain; J.C. Ice vs. Buddy Landel; American Kickboxer vs. Twiggly Ramirez; J.T. Atlas vs. Sean Casey; and Cash Flow vs. Tyren. ... A correction from issue #107. Tyren worked the triangle match for the lightweight title, not Terik the Great as had been reported. Terik was advertised but no-showed, as he got married that day. The feeling seems to be that Terik is done with wrestling. ... The IWA's rival, Kentuckiana Championship Wrestling, ran their weekly Louisville Gardens show on 11/18 before 224 paid. The crowds are shrinking at a rapid pace, which isn't a good sign. It's been shown as recently as a few months ago that people still want to see wrestling in Louisville (witness the WWF's PPV or the USWA's big crowd for the outdoor cage match show). But they are becoming discriminative about what they choose to view. Lots of names from New South Championship Wrestling worked the undercard (Reno Riggins, The Sheik, Tony Falk, etc.), which shows the ties between the two groups. The main event was Vic the Bruiser and Tower of Doom beating Shooting Stars. The heels got heat on Troy Haste, with Jerry Faith taking the hot tag. Tower ended up pinning Faith after manager Don Hudson gave Tower his shoe to use. Good booking move to have the heels get a pin on the faces. Faces never losing by pinfall was one of the many, many factors which killed USWA in this town. Next week's rematch between the teams will be with losers-eat-dog-food stip. The 11/25 show was scheduled to be headlined by a two-ring, 20-man battle royal, and will also feature Mike Samples vs. Terry Bull where if Samples wins, he gets to spank Bull's valet Dallas, Reno Riggins vs. Sean Venom, and Sabu. There are some people skeptical about Sabu's appearance.

Music City Wrestling

With a flea market renting the Fairgrounds, Music City instead ran its Saturday house show on 11/22 at the Airport Armory in Lebanon, TN. They only did five matches, which was precipitated by the promotion doing another house show that night in Harrisburg, IL (they split the crew). Lebanon drew a super-hot crowd of 150. The opener was Shane Eden beating "Centerfold" John Arden (with Paul Adams) in a good match. Arden tried a splash in the corner, Eden moved, Eden rolled him up, 1-2-3. "Centerfold" Ken Arden (with Adams) then beat Blackhawk (formerly Black Eagle/White Eagle) with his feet on the ropes. Nothing special. Princess Dee defeated Mighty Heidi Hudson, who worked as the babyface in this one. Hudson missed a somersault flip off the ropes and Dee pinned her using the ropes for leverage. Where did I see that finish before? Billy Travis (with Adams) defeated Doug Gilbert by DQ. Gilbert subbed for Nick Dinsmore, who missed the show for personal problems. Gilbert rolled up Travis and pinned him, but during the pinfall Travis put a chain in Gilbert's tights, leading to the reverse decision. Doug then did an interview to hype his scaffold match with Travis on Thanksgiving. In the main event, Wolfie D pinned Trailer Park Trash (managed by, you guessed it, Paul Adams!) with a powerbomb. Overall, it was a good show with lots of heat.

The TV taping on 11/20 at the Fairgrounds was for two weeks, but nothing really significant came out of it. They shot an angle to start the Rex King-Steven Dunn feud. Bull Pain and Killer Kyle made their debuts. Pain teamed with jobber Derek King to lose to Doug Gilbert and Wolfie D (King did the job). Kyle put over Colorado Kid in a short match. ... The complete lineup for the 11/27 Thanksgiving show: Wolfie D vs. Flash Flanagan in a ladder match with Jason Jarrett as referee; a scaffold match with

Doug Gilbert vs. Billy Travis; Colorado Kid puts up the North American title against Terry Golden's Southern belt; Shooting Stars vs. Centerfolds; Steven Dunn vs. Rex King; Adrian Street vs. Frenchy Riviera; Sherri Martel vs. Princess Dee; J.C. Ice vs. Sheik Akman; Shane Eden vs. Derek King; Eightball (from the DOA) vs. Andy Anderson; and Thrillbilly vs. Blade Boudreaux. Really strong lineup. ... They will run Lafayette, TN, on 11/28. That was the show originally supposed to be in Memphis. Speaking of Memphis, TV still hasn't debuted in that market yet, despite claims they are airing on Saturdays at 11 AM on Channel 30. ... The 11/15 show did a 2.2 rating on WNAB. ... The Harrisburg, IL, show had Colorado Kid, Frenchy Riviera, Scufflin' Hillbilly, and some Windy City Wrestling guys. Everybody was impressed with "Turbo" Eric Freedom, who was one of the said Windy City wrestlers. ... There had been talk about doing a Bert Prentice vs. Paul Adams match at the Thanksgiving show, but they scrapped it.

Independent Notes

Steve Corino was arrested after an indy show in Louisburg, NC, on 11/22, for simple assault of area promoter Brian "Dexter" Holly. Corino was wrestling Beau James at the show, which was being promoted by Southern Championship Wrestling (manager Count Grog is the promoter of record for them), when the two went outside the ring, brawling near the announcer's table. Holly (who had earlier attended an indy show in Henderson, NC, but left that show to come to this one) was standing near the table, and as the two men fought, Corino swung a chair at James and accidentally hit Holly. James then tossed a chair and it was deflected into Holly. Dexter, who has some heat with Corino stemming back to Holly's dismissal from the NWA, then immediately called the police, who showed up and interrogated Corino. Finally, they decided to arrest Corino after the completion of the main event, a Jimmy Valiant vs. Major DeBeers match. Eddie Brown, Jimmy Cicero, and Cueball Carmichael got in the ring and asked that as many people as possible show up to Corino's court date later in the year in his defense. Brown and Joey Matthews went to the courthouse with Corino, where he was released on his own recognizance. As if all this commotion wasn't enough, the crowd almost rioted during the Valiant-DeBeers match after DeBeers used brass knucks on Valiant.

A huge weekend of news from Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling, which ran two significant shows over the weekend. The first was 11/21 in Reading, PA, at the Cloister before 400, where three titles changed hands. Perhaps most shockingly, Cheetah Master lost the heavyweight title to, of all people, Tiger Khan. Booking wise, this would have been similar to Hulk Hogan dropping the WWF title to Haku in 1987. Khan has been working opening and second matches for a while now. Cheetah, on the other hand, is the biggest draw for both PCW promoter Blaine DeSantis and ECWA promoter Jim Kettner, and is seen by people as the top star. The title switch occurred in a lumberjack match. With the ref's back turned, Reckless Youth ran in and reversed a pin, putting Khan on top of Cheetah. The ref turned around and counted the pinfall. It was a real night of upsets, so to speak, as Boogie Woogie Brown also lost. He put over Kodiak Bear (a horrible worker) by countout. I wonder if they did the countout because Brown can't take bumps. At least I've never seen him take one. Lance Diamond won a best-of-three-falls match over Ace Darling to become the new Americas champ. The first fall was really good, and the next two were OK. In the other title change, Youth beat Mike Quackenbush for the junior heavyweight title. The stip on the match was that if Youth lost, Judd the Stud would no longer be his manager (if I were Youth, that would have me looking at the lights). Reckless and Judd argued throughout the match, with Judd accidentally clotheslining Reckless at one point. Judd then turned on Youth, and tried to hit him with his boot while Quackenbush held Reckless, but Youth moved and Quack took the boot. Reckless and Judd high-fived, proving the breakup was a ruse, and Youth got the pin. It was a damn good angle which the fans believed the whole way, but the angle did hold the work back a bit. Spellbinder wrestled as USWA heavyweight champion, teaming with Bart Gunn to beat Steven Dunn and Flash Flanagan (who are now managed by Judd the Stud). ebuting was Agent Maxx, who used to wrestle in the tag team The Border Patrol. They also did an angle with Joe Rules, who was serving as ring announcer. Rules challenged Barry Casino, and it ended up where Rules would wrestle Dave Patera the next night in Orwigsburg, PA, where if Rules lost, he would leave PCW, but if he won, Casino would have to leave. The Rules gimmick is getting over big-time with the fans there. At the Orwigsburg show, which drew 150, Rules pinned Patera with his feet on the ropes, so Casino is gone. Youth and Quackenbush did another match, which was better than Reading because they didn't have the limitations of the angle. Diamond kept the Americas title beating Steven Dunn by reverse decision. Spellbinder and Devon Storm had a pretty good match ending in a double-countout. As the two were fighting outside the ring, Ace Darling jumped Spellbinder, which led to those two brawling and the ref counting everybody out. The main event was a wild ten-man tag where Bart Gunn, Spellbinder, Cheetah Master, Diamond, and Julio Sanchez beat Darling, Storm, Youth, Flanagan, and Dunn when Gunn pinned Darling. This was the last match for Gunn in the promotion, as Blaine DeSantis announced he is headed back to the WWF. DeSantis was able to use him through an agreement with the WWF office. In fact, the WWF-PCW connection is actually pretty strong. Diamond said that he hoped "that idiot from Stamford" doesn't miss the boat and uses Gunn right. Col. Jihad Hussein missed both shows because of a neck injury which is possibly career threatening.

All-Pro Wrestling did a tournament on 11/22 in Heyward, CA, to determine new tag team champions after Vic and Dic Grimes were stripped of the titles. Robert Thompson and Chris Cole ended up winning. ... Long Island Wrestling Federation

debuted in Queens, NY, on 11/22, before 400 with a card of all tag team matches. Buh Buh Ray Dudley and Little Guido were at the show. During a tag match with Primo Camera III (who was Big Guido in ECW briefly) and Guillotine and LeGrande vs. Big Dog Marino and Quick Rick Silver, Dudley was rather vocal in giving instructions for Camera to "stretch" Marino. Following that, Camera began working very stiff with Marino. As Marino walked toward the back, he was confronted by Dudley in the aisle, who kept daring him to "cross the line". The heat between Marino and Dudley supposedly resulted from the previous night's ECW card in Poughkeepsie, NY, where Marino had been taunting Buh Buh from his second-row seat. The next LIWF show is 12/27. ... Cpl. Punishment promoted a show for MEWF on 11/21 in Catonsville, MD. The undercard was filled with students of the Bone Breakers wrestling school, where he is an instructor. The main event was King Kong Bundy over Sal Sincere by DQ when Sincere pushed the ref in the way of a charging Bundy. Iron Sheik was supposed to work Bundy but the WWF called him to work their Richmond house show instead. My vote for best name among the newcomers: Forty Ounce Ferguson (managed by Al Bino). How about a Ferguson vs. Rollin' Hard match? ... Otto Wanz is advertising Savio Vega, D-Lo Brown, Doug Gilbert, and Masa Chono for his annual 12/20 CWA Mega Night, which is the traditional biggest show of the year. They did a tournament in Bremen, Germany, on 11/15 with Jean Pierre Lafitte, Cannonball Grizzly (P.N. News), Rasta the Voodoo Mon, Osamu Nishimura, and Tony St. Clair appearing. There was also a recent weekend tournament in Berlin won by Miles Zmo, who beat Eddy Steinlock in the last match of the tourney. Grizzly finished second in the standings (they use a point system like All-Japan does with the Champion Carnival and Real World Tag League tourneys). ... Giant Warrior from North American All-Star Wrestling is working as Big Butch Bronson for the Mississippi Valley Wrestling Alliance, based out of Missouri. Bob Orton has been doing some dates for them as well. ... WWC in Manaukin, NJ, on 11/21 used a lot of the Jersey indie guys like Icon, Overweight Lover, the Reckless Bullies, and my personal choice for worst wrestler in the 10-year plus history of the business, "Wacky" Wayne Woo.

Upcoming shows: Jim Kettner's ECWA on 11/29 will have a three-way ladder match for the TV title with Ace Darling, Lance Diamond, and Reckless Youth, plus Cheetah Master & Kettner vs. Glen Osbourne & The Master in a cage, Billy Kidman vs. Devon Storm, a hair vs. hair match with Mr. Ooh La La vs. Gino Caruso, and Boogie Woogie Brown vs. Persian Prince, with the loser leaving ECWA for 60 days (come on, Prince!). To Kettner's audience, that is one of his strongest lineups. By the way, the Chyna ripoff that works on ECWA shows is now billed as "Iron" Annie Starr. ... MEWF returns to Baltimore on 12/5 with Sal Sincere, Jimmy Cicero, and Julio Sanchez vs. Cpl. Punishment and the Head Bangers. ... Dick Caricofe's NWL has two shows booked in the near future: 12/12 in Boonsboro, MD, and 12/13 in Moorefield, WV. For Boonsboro, the lineup includes John Rambo defending the heavyweight title against 911, and Samoan Gangstas (with Afa) vs. The Grungers for the vacant tag team belts. ... Looking way down the road, Dennis Coralluzzo will be promoting the 3rd annual Eddie Gilbert Memorial Brawl on 2/27 and 2/28 next year at the Airport Radisson in Philadelphia, PA. The first night features the tribute banquet, with Dory Funk Jr., Jerry Jarrett, Nick Bockwinkel, and others. 2/28 will have a fan convention and wrestling show.

The Japan Report

by Koji Yamamoto

ARSION Raiding

As I reported last week, there is a new women's promotion, called ARSION, starting up soon. Aja Kong will be a big part of running the show, but will not be the top wrestler, as we told you last week. In fact, the promotion is doing something that is very foreign in Japan, but fans of the American wrestling scene are well aware of, and that is they are raiding talent from other promotions. Unlike in the US, wrestlers jumping promotions is the exception, not the rule, and the tactics that this promotion is taking is not the way business is done here. This past week, Kong set her sights on JWP's Hikari Fukuoka, the current JWP champion, as their main wrestler. Kong also targeted Tomoko Kuzumi for her new promotion. ARSION is also saying that they will go after all of the wrestlers that they want, and will go after them by promising them things like less dates, more money, and more exposure with other promotions. JWP took preventive action when JWP president Masatoshi Yamamoto would not let Fukuoka & Kuzumi jump to ARSION.

The picture being painted though is clear. ARSION is planning on assaulting the talent of the existing promotions. LLPW announced this past week that Michiko Omukai & Mikiko Futagami left LLPW and are heading for ARSION. They join Rie Tamada, Yumi Fukawa, and Mariko Yoshida as the presently signed talent for the group.

The other women's promotions in Japan realize the threat that this group is forming, and they have begun to band together as All Japan Women, JWP, LLPW & GAEA have announced that they will be co-promoting shows together. This past week, Mayumi Ozaki appeared at a GAEA show and said she wants to fight Toshiyo Yamada. JWP announced they will work with AJW on 12/26/97 at Korakuen Hall & 1/23/98 in Kawasaki. This situation promises to be interesting to follow.

Stuff

All Japan and New Japan are in the midst of their tag tournaments. As of 11/24,

Toshiaki Kawada and Akira Taue are in the lead of All Japan's tourney with ten points. Kenta Kobashi and Johnny Ace have eight. Steve Williams & Gary Albright and Mitsuharu Misawa & Jun Akiyama are tied with seven. New Japan's tourney has just started, so we won't get into points until next week.

Tatsutoshi Goto & Michiyoshi Ohara were refused admission into NWO Japan so they will form an independent group in New Japan.

Kyoko Inoue's new promotion will be named "Neo Japan Women's Wrestling". It does not have any connections to New Japan Pro Wrestling.

All Japan Women ran on 11/23 in Nagoya. The show was headlined by a WWWA Championship match that saw champion Yumiko Hotta retain over Manami Toyota with a Pyramid Driver in 23:17. In other top matches, Takako Inoue defended the All Pacific championship when she beat Kumiko Maekawa in 18:03 with a cross knee scissors. In an All Japan tag championship match, Momo Nakanishi & Nanae Takahashi beat Motokawa (of IWA) & Sari Osumi (of JWP) when Nakanishi pinned Osumi in 18:57 with a German suplex.

TV Report

New Japan 11/1: This show was taped on 10/22 in Kitakyusyu and opened with El Samurai vs. Koji Kanemoto, joined in progress. Samurai hit a huracanrana and placed Kanemoto on the top rope and hit a reverse DDT. Kanemoto kicked out. Samurai hit a tope and completely dominated the match until Kanemoto came back with kicks. He followed with a belly-to-belly suplex, two Dragon screws, but then missed a moonsault when Samurai got up his knees. Samurai powerbombed Kanemoto and went for the cross arm scissors but Kanemoto escaped. Samurai went for a reverse brainbuster but Kanemoto flipped in the air, hit a spinkick to the back of the head, and pinned Samurai with a Tiger Suplex in 17:59.

The next match was a juniors six man with Jushin Liger, Norio Honaga, and Kendo Ka Shin taking on Shinjiro Otani, Tatsuhiro Takaiwa, and Negro Casas. The finish saw Liger powerbomb and brainbuster Otani but Takaiwa made the save. Honaga kicked Otani low. The fans popped. Honaga went for a diving clothesline but Otani didn't sell it. Otani then hit a springboard dropkick. With Liger & Casas in, Liger hit a palm blow. Casas tripped Liger down and went for La Magistral but Ka Shin made the save. Casas then missed a senton and Liger pinned him with a Ligerbomb in 13:58.

Next was the first of two eight man matches with Tatsumi Fujinami, Kengo Kimura, Kuniaki Kobayashi, and Akira Nogami taking on Masa Chono, Hiro Saito, Tatsutoshi Goto, and Michiyoshi Ohara. The finish saw Goto throw Kobayashi with a back suplex and go for the pin. Chono then touched Goto's shoulder, tagging in. Goto didn't know what happened. Chono threw Goto out, put Kobayashi in STF, and got the submission in 12:03. This builds heat between the two sides (even though they worked as a team that day).

The TV main was a New Japan vs. nWo Japan match with saw Kensuke Sasaki, Shinya Hashimoto, Kazuo Yamazaki, and Tadao Yasuda lose to Keiji Muto, nWo Sting, Michael Wallstreet, and Hiroyoshi Tenzan when Muto grabbed Yasuda's boot, did a Dragon Screw, and then slapped on the Figure Four, making Yasuda submit in 14:14. Two eight men tag matches in one program is too much.

All Japan 11/3: This show was taped on 10/21 at Budokan Hall and opened with a clip of Giant Baba, Jumbo Tsuruta, and Stan Hansen beating Kimala, Tamon Honda, and Masa Fuchi when Hansen hit a lariat on Honda for the pin. Tsuruta has lost a lot of weight.

The TV main was the "shoot style" match between Toshiaki Kawada vs. Yoshihiro Takayama. Very boring match. After 15 minutes, Takayama looked to have lost his stamina. Kawada punched Takayama over the guard, did a back suplex, and put him in a stretch plum. Kawada chopped the neck and hit somersault kicks, which knocked Takayama down. Kawada followed with two jumping kicks, hooked the leg, and pinned Takayama in 18:22. BORING!

New Japan 11/8: This show was taped at the Fukuoka Dome on 11/2 and opened with Masahiro Chono & Keiji Muto taking on Tatsumi Fujinami & Genichiro Tenryu. This was a slow, plodding match. At the end, Fujinami put the Dragon sleeper on Muto and Tenryu swept all the NWO members from the ring but Muto managed to escape. Chono came in and lowbowed Fujinami and put him in the STF but Fujinami grabbed the ropes. Muto came in and put Fujinami in the Figure Four. Muto hit two face crushers on Fujinami, Chono again put him in the STF, and he finally submitted in 21:33.

The next match was a boring shoot style match that saw Naoya Ogawa beat Erwin Vereker in 3:19 when Erwin submitted to the cross arm scissors.

Shinya Hashimoto then beat Hubert Numrich in the second round of a UFC style match. After trading holds in the first round, Hashimoto got the submission at 1:04 of the second round when he put Numrich in an arm bar.

The TV main saw Riki Chosyu take on Kensuke Sasaki in a teacher vs. student match. Since Chosyu's career is winding down, this was where Sasaki would finally get his win against his mentor. Early on, they locked up and exchanged punches and chops. Sasaki locked on the Scorpion but Chosyu escaped. They went back and forth until the finish, where Sasaki hit a Northern Lights Bomb and a lariat. Chosyu didn't move and heard three counts. After the match, Sasaki was weeping.

All Japan 11/9: This was the third week of the Budokan Hall show. It opened with Steve Williams, Gary Albright, and the Lacrosse (The Triangle of Power) taking on Johnny Smith, Bobby Duncum Jr., and Rex King. The T.O.P. dominated here. The finish saw Albright suplex King and Lacrosse followed with a powerslam. T.O.P. then teased him until Lacrosse splashed him for the pin at 13:31.

The TV main was a good match between Akira Taue and Johnny Ace. It started slowly with them exchanging headlocks and chops. They went outside and Taue whipped Ace into the guardrail and DDT'd him on the floor. Back in the ring, Taue hit clotheslines, a back elbow, and big boots. Ace came back with a back suplex and hit 4 clotheslines, getting a near fall. He got another with a missile kick. Taue came back with big boots and Ace fell from the ring. Taue hit a tope. Taue went for a nodowa in the ring but Ace blocked it. Taue placed him on the top turnbuckle and chokeslammed him from there. Taue powerbombed Ace and went for a nodowa but it was switched into an Ace DDT. Ace got a near fall with a Rocker Dropper. He got another with an Ace Crusher. He got a third with a moonsault. Ace did a Cobra crutch suplex but Taue escaped outside. Ace went for another one but Taue broke it with a back elbow. Taue hit a back suplex on Ace, climbed on the top, and gave Ace a diving big boot. Ace kicked out at two. Taue went for another nodowa-otoshi but this time it was switched into an Ace crusher. They exchanged chops. Taue's hand hit Ace's face. Taue followed with a face crusher, then a nodowa-otoshi. Taue picked Ace up and hit another nodowa. Finally, he picked Ace up again and hit a Liger bomb for the pin at 16:54.

THE MONDAY NIGHT WAR

by Dave Scherer

Eric Bischoff Chat

WCW boss Eric Bischoff took questions from members of the Prodigy service on 11/19 in a chat set up by Bob Ryder. Highlights appear below.

On the possibility of the WWF going out of business: "I have no idea. I've addressed this before internally to some of the talent. I think the way Vince McMahon is conducting his business, it wouldn't surprise me if he does. He is making so many bad decisions about the way he runs his business. I read a copy of his online chat where he compared the sexual content and racial content of his program, and he said he isn't doing things that have been done before, and he singled out NYPD Blue. That's the kind of poor judgement that if he does go out of business, he has nobody to blame but himself. While NYPD Blue has exposed derriere's and sexual content...one only has to look at the advertisers that ABC includes in that programming and you'll see that clearly that program is targeted towards adults, while McMahon's programming is clearly targeted at children, in many cases children under 12 years old. For the USA Network and Vince McMahon to suggest that it's OK to produce programming with the degree of sexual content, racial overtones, and in my opinion general bad taste while obviously selling their program to advertisers that are targeting children's toys and candy...I think it's nothing short of professional and social irresponsibility on the part of McMahon and the people who work with him, and the USA Network. It will be interesting to see how Barry Diller views McMahon's approach to children's programming. What exacerbates this problem in my opinion is for the most part, the Saturday morning program is almost totally a replay of the previous Monday's program. To have the degree of sexual content and racial overtones playing during prime time children's programming is absolutely ludicrous and professional suicide."

On addressing WCW's tag team ranks: "I'm not a big fan of the tag team division. There's just not enough well established tag combinations out there to provide a competitive arena at this point. Certainly the Steiner Brothers are at the top of the list of tag teams anywhere in the world. Harlem Heat is also an incredibly effective combination. Unfortunately with the amount of programming we have to produce, I'm not sure keeping the tag division intact as we know it is the best thing to do for our business, or the people involved. I'm not sure, frankly what I will do with the tag team division, whether to abandon it, or to shore it up with talent from around the world."

On Syxx: "Syxx has just undergone surgery last week to repair some disc damage in his neck. He's recovering. I think it should be pointed out, and Sean Waltman should be given credit for the fact that he's undergone this surgery and is recuperating without the use of pain pills because of his previous problems with them and because of his commitment to stay clean and to stay a part of this industry. With respect to some of the negative things Jim Cornette felt he needed to say about Sean Waltman, I think everyone reading this Prodigy Chat should take a look at the example Sean is setting and recognize him for his efforts."

On the perception that he is arrogant: "I think sometimes people confuse my on camera character with what they perceive the real Eric Bischoff to be like, and while I know some of my comments...even on these Prodigy sessions, come off as cocky and arrogant, I simply try to answer questions as honestly and forthright as I can without being politically correct in terms of what insiders may think. I am very confident in myself and my abilities and if that comes off as cocky and arrogant...so be it. In terms of succumbing to the vanity that precedes failure, I'm not even close to that. WCW still has a long way to go before anyone associated with our organization can afford to become over confident. The world changes very quickly, the television audience's appetite for programming changes very quickly, and the wrestling audience in general is really quite demanding. There really isn't time for anyone to run around and pat themselves, or for that matter, each other on the back."

Concerning Vince "Getting what he deserved" from Bret: "In terms of Vince getting what he deserved...I wasn't there, and really don't have any right to have a comment about that. I think if I could go back in time and erase anything that happened,

I think for Bret's sake I wish that hadn't happened because it was a negative situation all the way around. At the same time, I can understand. I think what happened to Bret was inexcusable and I know Bret is a fairly emotional individual, and I guess in some ways I can't blame him for the way he acted, but at the end of the day it's still a bad situation and I wish it hadn't happened for Bret's sake. I think the segments on RAW were a joke. I think Vince McMahon really believes his own BS. It just surprises me if anybody else believes it. I've read a lot, and heard a lot, about why Vince decided to doublecross Bret and to lie right to his face, and I know what really happened, Bret knows what really happened. Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, and company really know what happened. I think after today, and after the chat with Bret on Friday, that will be the end of it. People will have to make up their own mind on who screwed who. I can tell you this, Bret Hart for the past 14 or 15 years had demonstrated time and time again his commitment, his work ethic, his love to this industry, his loyalty to the WWF, and his integrity as a man. I fully expected after my conversations with Bret a few weeks ago, that Bret would have retained his integrity, his love for the business, and his loyalty to the WWF. I wouldn't have asked otherwise, and for Vince to do what he did was another act of desperation, paranoia, and self indulgence."

On the Rick Rude deal: "I had been talking to Rick, and in fact had offered Rick a deal several weeks ago. It was only last week that Rick called me and wanted to sit down and finalize the deal. That was done literally hours before we went on the air. Rick is extremely talented on the microphone, and can fit in a color commentator's role, or a manager's role, or perhaps both." Bischoff also stated that Rude is done with ECW and that his deal with WCW is exclusive.

On the sequence of events that led to Hart jumping to WCW: "Bret Hart called me. He told me that he was unhappy. I asked him if he was able to discuss leaving Titan from a legal point of view and joining WCW. He told me that he was. I met with Bret in Los Angeles, actually the day before Brian Pillman's funeral. I remember that because I had to fly to Los Angeles to meet Bret, and I took a redeye to Cincinnati in order to attend Brian's funeral. It was pretty obvious to me at that point that Bret was unhappy for a number of reasons particularly regarding the content and the direction of WWF programming. I immediately went to work trying to put together a deal that would work for both Bret and WCW/NWO. I don't remember the exact date, I think it was probably October 30...when we finalized our negotiations and agreed to a deal."

On the fan coming out of the crowd on the 11/17 Nitro: "People have come out of the crowd before the incident. It's happened numerous times over the years. The individual that tried to attack me on Monday was arrested, and I understand from Doug Dillinger that he was charged with disorderly conduct. I think it's important that aside from possibly getting hurt, which is always a possibility when you charge the ring, but you stand the chance of getting arrested. We'll continue to beef up security, both uniform and plain clothes, and we will continue to try to keep things like that from happening."

When asked about WCW having too many guys under contract: "Yes, I do. In fact, that's a problem that needs to be addressed and overcome."

On Vince McMahon's comments that Eric is using the money at his disposal to "destroy the business", forgetting that McMahon used the same tactics himself in the 80's: "That is interesting, and is a good observation, and one worth discussing. Vince McMahon, if you look at his history, took wrestlers from territories around the country...some of whom were under agreements. Unfortunately, many of those promoters didn't have the resources or experience to respond from a legal point of view. In fact, Vince McMahon is guilty in many ways of the same things that he accuses WCW of doing. The difference is, WCW is not 'stealing' anybody. WCW has the legal right to engage independent contractors who have the legal right to come to work for our organization. That's just the way the world turns Vince. With regard to the 'deep pockets' complaint that Jim Ross, Vince McMahon, and others espouse let me point out that I do, indeed, spend a tremendous amount of money...but fortunately for WCW, myself, and the nearly 200 people employed by this division...I've demonstrated the ability over the past several years, to make money with the money I'm given. That's called business. It's capitalism. Despite the fact that Jim Ross and Vince McMahon, they are the economic principals this company was built on. I think the thing that frustrates many people, and Jim Ross in particular, is while Jim Ross was in senior management in this company for a number of years...he was given a lot of money too. The difference is, he never demonstrated the acumen creatively to make money with the money he was given. Yes, I do spend a lot of money...and I make a lot of money for the company. WCW is in a strong position within the Turner organization because of that. Clearly it's not my money, and maybe in some minds that makes the accomplishment less significant. It doesn't change the fact that WCW has experienced tremendous growth in every area over the past three years that I've been in charge of this organization. Unless someone decides business should be run differently, chances are quite good that as long as we can continue to make money with Turner's money...they will continue to give us more. What a country."

On his prediction for the Starrcade buyrate: "I think our last buyrate was somewhere between 1.3 and 1.4 for Halloween Havoc. I would expect Starrcade to do in the 1.8 area."

On Jim Cornette and Jim Ross' comments about him: "I've worked with Jim Ross. Jim Ross worked with this company for a long time in a senior management position, very similar to the one he has now, and he was responsible in part for some of the largest and most embarrassing losses this division has had to endure. I'm sure that it's hard for him to deal honestly with the fact that his track record here at WCW from a business point of view can only be considered a dismal failure, and that after he

departed this company began to grow and prosper. I'm not suggesting that Jim Ross is solely responsible, but he was by his own admission an integral part of senior management here at that time. I know first hand that many of the creative decisions made here were made by Jim Ross. As far as Jim Cornette is concerned, I think the industry has passed him by. I think he's a small fish in a little pond that is quickly becoming a shot glass. I hope he has a long a successful relationship with the WWF.

No More Up Front Money

Thanks to Bob Ryder, for passing along this story, which first appeared on www.1wrestling.com and reprinted here, with permission.

The WWF will face more financial stress in January when a new Ticketmaster deal takes effect, eliminating a source of cash flow for the company. Sources close to the situation confirm that the existing Ticketmaster contract allows the WWF to get a 75% advance on any tickets already sold for house shows. The WWF has reportedly used that provision on a regular basis to help with cash flow problems.

A change in management at Ticketmaster brought a new policy, and effective in January money will only be available after the events take place. Arena shows have remained strong for the WWF, and the Ticketmaster policy has allowed the WWF to get advances on revenue to help offset reduced income from other areas.

The financial problems experienced by the WWF came to the attention of fans during the recent Bret Hart situation. The Hart departure was originally prompted when Vince McMahon approached Hart and told him the WWF was unable to continue with the contract agreed upon last year. Hart talked about the financial problems in his *Calgary Sun* column last week, saying, "Out of nowhere on September 21, into my fifth world title reign, I was informed by McMahon that he was in dire financial straits and was going to be forced to break my contract."

Published reports lately have speculated that the WWF might consider a public offering to raise money, but sources indicate that isn't a "quick fix". Any attempt at a public offering would first require a lengthy investigation and audit from regulatory agencies, such as the Security and Exchange Commission. The WWF would be forced to completely open their books for public scrutiny, and in the past they have been reluctant to expose their operation to that kind of inspection.

The financial difficulty comes at a time where there are questions about the prospects for a continued relationship with the USA Network. A new group, headed by Barry Diller, is taking over operations of the network, and Diller has an established track record of being heavily involved in programming decisions.

While the ratings the USA Network gets for RAW are relatively good, the true test comes in their ability to sell advertising for the program. As Eric Bischoff has stated in Prodigy Chat, it's difficult to solicit advertisers for wrestling programming, and with the current content of the RAW it will be difficult to get renewals from advertisers such as Karate Fighters who aim for a children's audience.

A WWF source conceded that the current programming on RAW is aimed at a more mature audience, and said the ads directed at children were sold a year in advance.

Even the current management of the USA Network has expressed displeasure in the past about the content on RAW. A spokesman for the network said, "It's not like we couldn't put a movie in that time slot," when asked to comment on the fallout following the Brian Pillman gun incident on RAW last year. If the WWF lost the USA Network, sources say they might be forced to purchase time on a smaller cable network like ESPN2. Despite rumors being floated by people close to the WWF, and by Vince McMahon himself, it doesn't appear likely that the Fox Network would be interested in the show. Sources close to Fox say there is no interest in involvement with professional wrestling.

The WWF has undergone considerable downsizing in the last two years, with several longtime employees being forced out of the company due to staff reductions. More restructuring may happen in the next few months as the company attempts to solidify their shaky financial condition. ... Thanks again Bob!

PPV Thoughts

Not a whole lot to say about the show. To me, it was kind of like the NFL this year, parity city. Nothing terrible, but nothing exceedingly good either. Some random thoughts: Could the fans have cared any less about Raven? Man, the guy was not over at all. I don't want to be a broken record here, but his stuff worked in ECW for the same reasons it won't work in WCW, it's apples and oranges. Ric Flair looked old. His match with Hennig was WAY too long. Flair is an old pro, for sure, but it just ain't there for 20 minute matches any more. He can stay a player in WCW, largely due to the "stop and pop" style of the Nitro show, but please, keep his matches under ten minutes. Eddy Guerrero is awesome. He is among the best there is, maybe ever. With his talent, psychology, and just overall ring presence he owns the ring when he's in there. As for Rey Jr., he was off his game. He missed a ton of moves. I wonder if the same pundits who run down Sabu when he misses spots will be as critical towards Rey, since the latter is their friend while the former is not. Personally, with guys like Rey and Sabu, missed spots largely means they tried to do some really hard stuff, so I don't hold that against them. The match was still easily the best on the show. The Battle Royal? For a PPV show, it's a dumb concept since the people buying the show can't really see what's going on, and that is what a VIEWER wants isn't it? Hogan just can appear whenever he wants and do what he wants? Well, it's obvious that the WWF is not the only shooting promotion, because that is what happens behind the scenes in WCW too, and now they too are showing their fans. And just like in the WWF, when a Vince McMahon talks about

pressing charges against Bret Hart for hitting him (which no fans saw) while ignoring Steve Austin hitting a Stunner on him (which the world saw), well, it just further serves to make fans scratch their heads, and in most cases it's not because of their dandruff either. As if Hogan's appearance was not silly enough, Kevin Nash playing Sting, and everyone acting like they bought it, was even more insulting. Man, the guy is six inches taller than the real Sting, and only a fool would think it was Sting, but everyone in WCW acts like it was and expects us to believe it. Stupid stuff. The rest of the show was so bland and boring I really have nothing else to add. Definitely a Bic lighter, throwaway show. I did check the online response to the show the next day, and a lot of the fans online said they thought it was a good show, so what the hell right?

Nitro 11/24

The show, from Saginaw, MI, opened with the nWo crowing about, well, having everything worth having in WCW. There were a few veiled shots at Vince McMahon, with Hogan holding up a sign that said, "Bischoff owns Vince" and Hogan putting over Bischoff as THE man in the biz. Hogan then said he would put the title on the line against anyone. The Giant came out and said he would take the challenge. Hogan accepted. J. J. Dillon said that he could not let the Giant wrestle because of his "bad thumb". Giant said he would sign a waiver and Dillon agreed to let him wrestle. Oh well, that guarantees Raw will get killed again! ... The Steiners then beat two new guys named Disorderly Conduct with the bulldog from the top. Scott had problems getting Disorderly, or what it Conduct, up on his shoulders. ... Booker T. beat Meng with a surprise roll-up. Men then put on the Tongan Death Grip. Stevie Ray came out and broke a balsa wood chair on Meng, but Meng no sold. The Barbarian came, largely for the hell of it, because Meng did not need him and put the grip on Stevie. Jackie has a nice set of melons. ... They then recapped the Raven situation from last night and then J. J. Dillon went to ringside to meet with Raven. Dillon said that he received a contract by courier from Raven. Raven, who had Scotty Riggs join him, said he put stipulations in the contract that says, in essence, he can do what he wants. ... They announced Raven to wrestle Chris Benoit, but he sent Sick Boy in to work instead. It went back and forth until Raven's guys came in. Benoit managed to get the Crippler Crossface for the win. Then Raven's guys came in and attacked Benoit, with Perry Saturn locking on his finisher. Raven got heat this night because the crowd chanted "Raven Sucks". ... After airing an "ad" by the nWo where they made Larry Zbysko look like a chump (and saying he could not even beat Eric Bischoff), Larry went to the ring and challenged Scott Hall to come out. The nWo dropped flyers from the ceiling with a picture of Eric Bischoff posing over a prone Zbysko. Can you see where this is going? Bischoff came out and ran down Larry on the mic, saying Scott Hall is too busy to mess around with an old man announcer like him. Bischoff then said he could not even beat him, so Larry called him out and Bischoff agreed. Of course, he did not come to the ring. Larry said he was going to make Dillon sign the match. ... Alex Wright, with Debra, then lost to Prince Laukea. During the match, Debra got on the apron and Wright wanted her to leave. She wouldn't. She said her dress was caught on the turnbuckle. While Wright was arguing with her, Prince beat him with a crossbody from the top rope. Wright fired her after the match. ... Randy Savage, with Elizabeth, took on The Disco Inferno. Liz freely interfered, which I found kind of cool. Savage got the pin with two elbow drops from the top rope. Savage hit another one and was going for a fourth when ref Mickey Jay grabbed him. Bad moves. Savage trashed him, he and Liz painted him, and then Savage counted a pin when Liz put her foot on Disco. Savage dropped another elbow, just for good measure. ... Brad Armstrong (who came out while his little brother was winning the WWF tag titles with Billy Gunn at the same time on Raw, and man, who do those two have naked pictures of and with what farm animal) lost to Dean Malenko when Dean hit the Texas Cloverleaf. Good, competitive match. ... Gene Okerlund then interviewed Mongo McMichael. He was ragging on Debra when she came out. She told him they were a great team ad wanted to come back with him. He told her to take a hike. ... Buff Bagwell then beat Chris Jericho, in a good match, with the Buff Blockbuster. ... Curt Hennig then beat Ray Traylor in a US title match when the nWo ran in. They also sprayspainted Traylor. ... Before the main event, Rick Rude and Eric Bischoff came out and did commentary. The Giant then beat Hulk Hogan by DQ when the nWo came out and jumped him. Of course, the nWo was in the form of Kevin Nash, again as a fake Sting. Ugh. Nash hit the Giant with the bat a few times. Then, he pulled off the cast and trashed his "bad thumb". A Sting mannequin came down from the ceiling and the nWo beat that up too. ... Decent show, and hey, why change the formula when it works?

Raw 11/24

Thanks to Jess McGrath for the following report. ... RAW, which was broadcast live on 11/24 from Fayetteville, NC, opened with the typical pettiness that has come to be expected in the wrestling war. Rick Rude's music played, and out came Harvey Whippleman carrying the haliburton. He intro'd Degeneration X. When they got into the ring, Shawn Michaels pushed down Whippleman, saying, "That was a tough role to fill." Yawn. Michaels took full responsibility for the Survivor Series situation with Bret Hart, and said that Hart was still under contract to the WWF until 11/30. Michaels said he and Hart would be face-to-face in the ring that night to settle the controversy. Two questions: Did anybody really think Bret Hart would be there? And does the WWF ever get a guilty conscience about this false advertising stuff? Jesse James & Billy Gunn

Bret the Midget!



defeated Legion of Doom to win the World tag team titles. Animal put Gunn on his shoulders to set up for the clothesline finisher, but James hit Animal in the back with a chair. Hawk chased James out, and Gunn rolled through on Animal and held the cradle while a second ref ran in and counted the pin. James and Gunn ran out of the building with the belts into a waiting car, where they nearly collided with a limo on the way out. Booking-wise, it's a very good idea, because no one was taking James and Gunn seriously as tag title contenders going into the December PPV. But James and Gunn suck. Goldust then did an interview, brought out in a wheelchair by a nurse with a concealed face (can you see what's coming?). He said that his hand injury spread through his entire body, paralyzing him. Vader came out to confront him and decked him. The nurse sprayed alcohol in Vader's eyes, and Goldust jumped out of the chair to pound on Vader. The nurse took off her garb to reveal Luna Vachon, the "new woman" in Goldust's life. Sgt. Slaughter did an interview announcing that his match with Hunter Hearst Helmsley at the December PPV will be a boot camp match. He got a really weak reaction, even though he did the promo in old Slaughter fashion, calling Helmsley a puke, slime, and so forth. Brian Christopher beat Flash Flanagan (called Flanagan) in the final match of the first round of the light heavyweight title tournament after an Alabama jam. OK match.

The second hour opened with the Hart-Michaels confrontation. Or at least they said it would. When Hart was introduced, out came a midget in a leather jacket, sunglasses, fake wig, and fake face. This was so incredibly lame.

Michaels put the midget in a sharpshooter, and Helmsley asked the midget who is the icon, who is the best there is, best there was, best there ever will be, and who is the show stopper, and the midget said Michaels. Finally Jim Neidhart came out to yell at Michaels. He said Davey Boy Smith was home after minor knee surgery (to which Michaels made a quip about phony knee injuries, saying he knew all about that), and Owen Hart was distraught over Bret being screwed. Michaels offered Neidhart a slot in Degeneration X, which he had until the end of the show to accept. Ken Shamrock beat Savio Vega by submission to an ankle lock. Nation of Domination did an interview. Steve Austin came out from the other side of the building and jumped Rocky Maivia. He then got a chair and ran off the rest of the NOD. Jeff Jarrett vs. Crush was next, but Jarrett refused to wrestle, saying his contract called for a better locker room, catered food, and quality opponents. Jarrett kept saying his opponent was Chainz. Crush was announced as the winner by forfeit. Kane then came out to a huge pop and destroyed Crush. The DOA arrived to save Crush, as did several officials. Jerry Brisco took a chokeslam from Kane. Austin and Kane are the WWF's two biggest strengths right now. The finale was Shawn Michaels vs. Vader in a non-title match. Neidhart came out with DX, accepting the offer. Michaels won when Helmsley tossed coffee in Vader's good eye (he had one eye taped, selling the alcohol toss by Luna earlier), and Shawn hit him with two superkicks for the pin. DX turned on Neidhart and left him laying afterward. After they went off the air, Neidhart made a comeback. Not a horrible show, but certainly not great. The WWF's roster didn't look as thin as it does on paper right now. The Bret Hart stuff was really lame, and whether people have grown sick of the bait-and-switch tactics is something the ratings may answer.

Stuff

Luckily for me, Jess covered Raw this week. As those of you who saw the show know, they did plug the ECW PPV. The ECW guys were welcome to come to the show live, but the braintrust had too much to do in preparation for the PPV to spend the time going down to Carolina. I do feel obligated to say that the pettiness of the show was beyond pathetic. While I was in the minority and enjoyed the nWo parody of the Four Horsemen, I found this one really petty. For those of you who say, "What's the difference?" Well, at least with WCW's version, it was done to build heat for a feud. Granted, there may have been some personal things there as well, but at least it was done to get over a storyline which the company, in theory, could make money from. The whole Michaels shtick was done for one reason, to rag on and embarrass Bret Hart. Really pitiful.

The situation with Owen Hart and Davey Boy Smith is largely the same. Neither seems to want to come back, but the reality of their situations, with being signed for years to come, means they probably have to. Smith is saying his knee is hurt while Hart has been reportedly been given leave until the end of December. ... A rumor going around as I was going to press was that Bret Hart had two broken bones in his hand, and Vince has a broken ankle, from the fight. Take that for what it's worth, because it's unconfirmed.

In addition to Hulk Hogan vs. Sting at Starrcade, they will also have Eric Bischoff vs. Larry Zbysko and The Giant vs. Kevin Nash. ... The advance for the 12/15 Nitro in Charlotte, NC is over \$120,000 already.

As we go to press, there are conflicting reports as to whether Ric Flair was really hurt at the PPV. I was told he was not scheduled to be in the Battle Royal, but also heard that his ankle was very swollen and he was scheduled to get an MRI. I will clarify this next week.

Ryder also reported this past week that Ric Flair has signed a new three year deal with WCW that will keep him with the company through the year 2000. This puts to rest all of the rumors about Flair jumping back to the WWF.

The UFC offered the WWF \$100,000 for the right to use Ken Shamrock on

their 12/21 PPV show. The WWF turned them down, for a few reasons. One, the WWF is planning to push Shamrock huge and don't want him missing shows to do the necessary training that he would need to do to compete in the UFC. They also don't want him getting hurt there, or worse yet, suffering a loss that would make him less marketable. The WWF was toying with an idea of sending someone else, but they decided that they are thin enough right now and can't afford it. And really, other than Vader, who is too beat up to do it anyway, no one from the WWF really fits the bill anyway.

Vince McMahon announced in a locker room meeting to the wrestlers last week what was already pretty obvious to most of us, and that is that he is going all the way towards a more adult oriented product. He told the wrestlers that they will leave the "family entertainment" style of wrestling to WCW and Eric Bischoff. Now, they are going to do back to back \$400,000 plus gates at their last two shows, so I don't know why he would want to leave THAT to them, but that's another matter for another discussion. I have said before that I think, given what they have shown so far, the WWF is not prepared or equipped with the ideas it will take to make the harder edged style work. ECW works because the style IS Paul Heyman. It's not Vince McMahon. In Titan, crowds are still good and they are generating revenue but I wonder how much of that is because they are still drawing people based on the product they used to sell. With Milton Bradley sponsoring shows for kids (their demographic) and then having the anything but childlike programming air which occurs on those cards, one has to wonder about their future sponsorships. The Karate Fighters deal was cut last year and I would have to think that, again, Milton Bradley thought they were getting a different product than what it has turned out they have gotten, that is unless they are going to move into a line of adult books stores.

With the debut of the new Thursday Thunder show on TBS in January, two longtime WCW shows will be leaving the air as WCW Pro and the Main Event will be cancelled. I think this is a good move, for a few reasons. For one, six hours of weekly programming for one station (and that does not even count Nitro) is just too much for them to do, even with all the talent they have. The other reason is those shows are both throwaways, and the new show will mean something. And speaking of the new show, it will only air on Thursdays until baseball season starts in April, at which time it will move to Wednesdays. At least, that is the plan right now.

In addition to Bischoff, Bret Hart was also scheduled to do a Prodigy chat on 11/21 but his lawyer advised him to cancel it, since he was still technically under contract until December 1st and the WWF has a month to month deal with AOL. So, if Hart does the chat without permission from Titan, which he ain't gonna get, he would be in violation of his contract. For those of you who are, correctly, saying that Vince breached Bret's contract when he changed the finish, you are right, he did. But, to prove that Bret would have to go to court and with the contract expiring a little more than a week after the scheduled chat, it just makes sense to wait. Hart is scheduled to do a chat on the second of third of December, and we will, of course, bring you the highlights. In an interesting aside, Jim Ross has asked to do a Prodigy chat as well, AFTER Bret does his. Damage Control, it's more than just the pretty blonde who comes to ringside in ECW folks! ... Hart was also scheduled to be on Canada's TSN network, which is an all sports station like ESPN, but cancelled the appearance. Word I got was that in addition to the similar reason that he cancelled the Prodigy chat, in this case McMahon demanded equal time if Bret got to do his interview. ... Ratings for the shows of 11/17 saw Nitro do a 4.1 (a 4.3 first hour, 4.0 second hour) while Raw did a 3.1 (3.0 and a 3.3). The main draw of Raw, obviously, were Vince McMahon's interview segments. The first one drew a 3.4, which was almost a point swing in the ratings because Nitro went down to a 3.5. The second did a 3.5. No doubt the WWF publicized the weak, "Shawn will challenge Bret on Raw" storyline just to get people to tune in. I hope they realize how sad it is that the only subject that will draw them a rating is discussing a guy who has just joined the competition. Anyway, the Nitro replay did a 2.0. ... WCW's Cruiserweight tourney has been postponed for now. The scenario is that when it happens, the winner will get a shot at the title. ... Mike Tenay is putting together a video in WCW commemorating the career of Brian Pillman in that organization. The proceeds will benefit Pillman's family. ... As of press time, Starrcade ticket sales are over 13,000 tickets and \$430,000 for the gate. ... The WWF is big time interested in Stevie Richards but he will not be signing with them. ... Ron Lemieux passed along that he was told that the Royal Rumble show will be built around a Hell in the Cell, part two with Undertaker and Shawn Michaels headlining. He also told me that he heard Cactus Jack will make his return, against Kane. As for Ron's column, no need to insert a joke. The facts are funnier than any joke, at least until the boy makes it to the Arena.

Weekend Shows

The WWF ran in Richmond, VA and Greensboro, NC this past weekend. The Greensboro show, which drew an estimated 12,500 fans, was a big success for the company. The show was headlined by The Undertaker beating WWF Champ Shawn Michaels by DQ when DX interfered. Before Bret Hart left, UT lost by DQ when the Hart Foundation ran in. Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose. UT took out DX to end the card. ... Dude Love beat Rocky Maivia in a Falls Count Anywhere match. Steve Austin was with Dude while the NOD was with Rocky. ... The rest of the card saw Ken Shamrock beat Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Mark Henry beat D. Lo Brown in a bad match (Henry still blows), LOD beat Roaddog James and Billy Gunn by DQ (they did a false finish where the challengers were announced as champs), Kane beat Vader, Mark Mero beat Flash Funk, Ahmed Johnson beat the Sultan in a wretched match,

DOA beat the Boricuas, and in the opener, which was the best of the night, TAKA Michinoku beat Brian Christopher.

The Richmond show saw Marc Mero over D-Lo Brown, The DOA over Los Boricuas, Brian Christopher over TAKA Michinoku, LOD over Jesse James & Billy Gunn, Mark Henry over The Sultan, Ken Shamrock over Semi Colon, er Kama, Dude Love over Rocky Maivia, and Undertaker over Hunter Hearst Helmsley. In the main event, which was a casket match, Shawn Michaels and Chyna came to ringside and were giving fans some major crap. Some fans spit on the DX members in retaliation. The finish saw HHH thrown in the casket, of course. When the rest of DX came in, UT chokeslammed them as well. Isn't it strange how the more the business gets exposed, the fans, who in theory should realize how much more the business is entertainment than actual sport, still act like complete assholes? UT left and when DX got out of the casket, Michaels did a mega-heel, and some reports said over the line, interview where he shot all over the fans, very rudely. Fans, many of whom were drinking, if not drunk, began throwing garbage at the ring. An elderly man on the floor was hit with a can and had to be taken to the hospital for stitches, since he got busted open. Fans pushed and punched at DX as they left the ring and security was called in. ... I was told that the Dude Love matches were good both nights.

The WWF finished the weekend in Hampton, VA on 11/23. In the opener, Brian Christopher beat TAKA with a powerbomb. Mark Henry beat D. Lo Brown with a powerslam. DOA beat the Boricuas. Kane beat Vader with a tombstone. Dude Love beat Rocky Maivia in another good, Falls Count Anywhere match. Steve Austin came in and hit the Stunner on Rocky for Dude to get the pin. The NOD came down and he got all of them too. Mark Mero beat Flash Funk with the TKO. LOD beat Gunn and James to retain the tag belts. UT beat HHH in a casket match, with the same finish as the night before.

Closing Notes: I goofed! For those of you who did not notice, I forgot to change both the issue number and date on last week's issue. I would like to throw out some Oliver Stone-like conspiracy as to why it happened, but I can't. I just screwed up!

UK Stuff

Oh my God, Suckerpunch is out next week! Something is obviously wrong, somewhere, as it returns bigger and, well bigger before. Seriously (...) we have changed some of the input and you will see a slightly different selection of articles, including the now world famous No Show Ditties!

Business Matters

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